

Preface

The social, cultural and political domination of Sikkim during the colonial period (1889 to 1947) is a prelude to the reconstruction work that was undertaken by the rulers of Sikkim namely Sir Tashi Namgyal and Chhogyal Palden Thondup and presently being done by the democratic government of Sikim. While the post 1947 reforms are dissimilar in pattern, nevertheless there is an underlying thread of unity imposed upon the people of Sikkim by colonialism. Interestingly enough, just as it has happened in other parts of India so also in Sikkim, even before its accession to India in 1975, a struggle to delineate an identity originating from the traditional cultural roots of the Lepchas, Bhutias and the Nepalese fatefully confronting colonial cultural subversion has continued. The struggle might not be very intense today but it has not completely subsided.

The small cultural battles of yore that had been fought by the Sikkimese against subversion of identity and sadly lost have suggested that an organised programme to study those battles, and in some places to reconstruct them is needed. That modern Sikkimese require it for guidance is one aspect of the issue. What is perhaps equally important is to empirically scrutinise some theoretical assumptions that have been thrown up by the post-colonial discourses in the course of the last three decades. How does the Sikkimi condition fit in with the broad-spectrum ‘mimicry’, ‘hybridity’, ‘authenticity’ paradigm of Homi Bhabha? Clad in the garment of the counter question and academic network sensoriousness is projected by way of simplification of the complex network of presumtuousness and zephyr of metonymic language. For those amongst them in Sikkim, who are protagonists of tradition colonialism and spelt cultural diaster by seeking always to construct the Sikkimese in its own cultural mould. But the cultural converts argued, such as they argue now, that modernisation of Sikkim has started with the active intervention of the British in Sikkim administration. For them, presumably, Claude White was a cultural ‘icon’ figuring out a modern man from the rough contours of a Himalayan cultural ecology.

On the basis of archival sources, oral history and extensive use of private collections spread over Gangtok, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Shillong and Kathmandu we have developed our argument in the *Socio-Economic Condition of Sikkim under Colonial Domination (1889-1947): An Authenticity Discourse*. Apart from other things we have attempted first time to construct a complete narrative of a Nepali family in Sikkim, who were the most prominent amongst the first Nepali settlers. Family papers of Lachhmi Das (Laxmi Das) have been salvaged from its descendants settled in different places within and outside Sikkim, and the entire narrative has been incorporated in the dissertation as an appendix in consideration of the fact that all of it may not be very relevant to our logic. Besides, on the basis of Sikkimi sources, hitherto unexplored by the researchers, an alternative version, or in other words the Sikkimi version of the treatment meted out to Maharaja Thutob Namgyal by the British officials of the frontier areas has been furnished to underline the predicament of the ruler of a small State. Digreesing from the old hat of relational studies, i.e., Anglo-Sikkim Relations, on justifiable grounds, the present study has ventured into an exploration of the multiple reforms excuted with ruthless passion. Missionary papers from Kalimpong and Shillong have enabled us to add a new dimension to our pursuit. From simple narratives this study has moulded into an analytical construction of the Sikkim episode of colonialism.